

July 2008

COMBATING TERRORISM

Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership



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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-08-860, a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal year 2005, the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) was established to eliminate terrorist safe havens in northwest Africa by strengthening countries' counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology. Funds obligated for TSCTP in fiscal years 2005 through 2007 and committed for fiscal year 2008 by the Department of State (State), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DOD) have amounted to about \$353 million for activities in nine partner countries. In this report, GAO examines (1) the distribution of funds for TSCTP and the types of activities supported and (2) the program's implementation, including the extent to which it is guided by a comprehensive, integrated strategy. GAO has reported previously on the need for a strategy that includes priorities and milestones that can help agencies collaborate in combating terrorism. GAO analyzed TSCTP-related documents and conducted work in Mali, Morocco, and Mauritania.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State work with the heads of other partner agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy for TSCTP. GAO also recommends that the Secretaries of State and Defense issue joint guidance regarding DOD personnel operating in TSCTP partner countries. State and USAID concurred, and DOD partially concurred, with GAO's findings and recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-860](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

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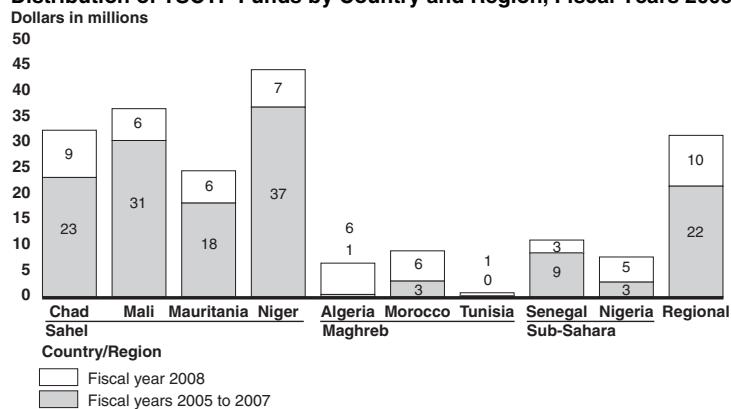
COMBATING TERRORISM

Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership

What GAO Found

In fiscal years 2005 through 2007, State, USAID, and DOD distributed about 74 percent of their obligations for TSCTP to Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger; about 3 percent to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia; and about 8 percent to Nigeria and Senegal. The remaining 15 percent was distributed through regional assistance, such as military exercises in multiple partner countries. The agencies expected to distribute about half of total funds committed for TSCTP for fiscal year 2008 to Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger and the remainder among the other countries. State, USAID, and DOD have supported a wide range of diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities aimed at strengthening partner countries' counterterrorism capacity and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology. For example, State—the lead agency for TSCTP—has hosted educational programs intended to marginalize violent extremists; USAID supported efforts to improve education and health; and DOD has provided counterterrorism training in marksmanship and border patrol to the militaries of partner countries.

Distribution of TSCTP Funds by Country and Region, Fiscal Years 2005-2008



Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and DOD data.

Note: Commitments shown for 2008 are based on State, USAID, and DOD estimates as of June 2008.

Several factors have hampered the key agencies' implementation of TSCTP activities, in some cases limiting their ability to collaborate in working to combat terrorism. First, the agencies lack a comprehensive, integrated strategy for their TSCTP activities, and the documents used in planning the activities do not prioritize proposed activities or identify milestones needed to measure progress or make improvements. Second, disagreements about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in partner countries have led to DOD's suspending some activities, for example, in Niger. Third, fluctuation in State's and USAID's distribution of funds for TSCTP resulted in suspension of a peace-building program in Mali. Fourth, although the agencies measure activities' outputs, such as the number of foreign military personnel trained, they do not measure their activities' outcomes in combating terrorism—for instance, any decrease in extremism in the targeted countries.

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Abbreviations

AFRICOM	U.S. Africa Command
CAP	country action plan
COM	Chief of Mission
COCOM	Combatant Command
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
ESF	Economic Support Funds
EUROCOM	U.S. European Command
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
OEF-TS	Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara
OSD	Office of Secretary Defense
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
S/CT	State Coordinator for Counterterrorism
TSCTP	Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership

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**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

July 31, 2008

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The growing presence of terrorist safe havens in northwestern Africa, as well as the region's vast ungoverned spaces, smuggling routes, porous borders, and fragile states, contributes to an environment vulnerable to the spread of violent extremist ideology. The affiliation of some terrorist groups in the region with Al Qaeda, as well as such groups' increased efforts to attract young recruits, has also prompted concern that the region could be used as a base for launching attacks against U.S. interests.¹ Eliminating terrorist safe havens in ungoverned regions to prevent such attacks is a critical U.S. national security goal.

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is the primary vehicle of U.S. counterterrorism policy in northwestern Africa. Established in 2005,² TSCTP is a multiyear, multiagency effort to support diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities aimed at strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology.³ TSCTP presently operates in nine partner countries—Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger in the Sahel region; Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in the Maghreb region; and Nigeria and Senegal in the sub-Saharan region—and may include other countries in the future. Key agencies participating in TSCTP are the Department of State (State), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DOD), with State's Bureau of African Affairs as the program lead. Since the program's inception, the key agencies'

¹For example, an Algerian terrorist group, formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), merged with Al Qaeda in September 2006 and subsequently, in early 2007, changed its name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

²In this report, all years cited are fiscal years (Oct. 1-Sept. 30).

³TSCTP, originally known as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, was developed as a follow-on to the Pan-Sahel Initiative, which provided basic military training and equipment to the militaries of Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger from 2002 through 2004.

obligations and commitments⁴ for TSCTP have amounted to about \$353 million, primarily for diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities, respectively.⁵ The Departments of the Treasury and Justice and several intelligence agencies also conduct limited counterterrorism activities in TSCTP partner countries.⁶

Given the U.S. government's interest in enhancing foreign governments' ability to combat terrorism, this report examines (1) the distribution of funds for TSCTP in 2005 through 2008 and the types of activities supported and (2) the program's implementation, including the extent to which it has been guided by a comprehensive, integrated strategy. We have reported previously on the need for such a strategy, as well as other key elements, to enhance and sustain collaboration in large interagency efforts to combat terrorism.⁷

In conducting our work, we analyzed TSCTP policy, planning, budget, and programming documents provided by State, DOD, and USAID. We met with agency representatives, including officials in Washington, D.C. and at the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany. In addition, we met with U.S. embassy, host nation government, and nongovernmental organization officials in Morocco, Mali, and Mauritania. In selecting the countries to visit, we considered the agencies' resource allocations in each country, the countries' geographic distribution, the number and duration of TSCTP activities in each country, and TSCTP representatives' recommendations. We requested that State, USAID, and DOD provide funding data by country and account; although there are some limitations

⁴Obligations reflect a liability or binding agreement. Commitments are estimates or projections that may be used to project future obligations but are not based on a legal obligation.

⁵From 2005 through 2007, the key agencies participating in TSCTP obligated about \$230 million for TSCTP activities. For 2008, the agencies' commitments totaled approximately \$123 million.

⁶These agencies are considering increasing their TSCTP involvement in the future.

⁷Our previous work has shown that the following practices can help agencies overcome barriers to interagency collaboration in large-scale efforts where such collaboration is essential: (1) develop a strategy with clearly defined goals and objectives, among other elements; (2) agree on roles and responsibilities and establish policies for operating across agency boundaries; (3) identify resource needs and deploy available resources; and (4) develop mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results. See page 46 of this report for a listing of our previous work.

in the ways these data were collected and maintained, we concluded that the data were sufficiently reliable to meet the objectives of our report.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2007 to July 2008, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Appendix I provides a more detailed description of our scope and methodology. We plan to issue a classified annex to this report.

Results in Brief

In 2005 through 2008, the key agencies distributed the majority of the obligated and committed resources to countries in the Sahel region, supporting a range of diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities. In 2005 through 2007, the agencies distributed about 74 percent of approximately \$230 million obligated to the four countries in the Sahel region, about 3 percent to the countries in the Maghreb region, and about 8 percent to the countries in the sub-Saharan region; the remaining 15 percent of the obligations was distributed through regional assistance, such as military exercises in multiple countries. As of June 2008, the agencies expected to distribute about half of approximately \$123 million committed for TSCTP for 2008 to the Sahel countries and to distribute the remaining commitments among the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan countries and through regional assistance. The agencies have supported a wide range of activities related to diplomacy, development, and military assistance. For example, State has hosted educational and cultural exchange programs intended to isolate and marginalize violent extremists; USAID supported efforts to improve education and health; and DOD has provided counterterrorism training in marksmanship and border patrol as well as distributed equipment such as vehicles to the militaries of TSCTP partner countries.

Several challenges have hampered the key agencies' implementation of TSCTP activities, in some cases limiting their ability to collaborate in working to strengthen countries' counterterrorism capacity and inhibit the spread of extremist ideology.

- No comprehensive, integrated strategy has been developed to guide the program's implementation. The documents used in planning TSCTP activities lack key elements that we have found to be needed in strategies

for large interagency programs, such as a clear definition of the program's goals and objectives and milestones linked to these objectives. State, USAID, and DOD have developed separate plans related to their respective TSCTP activities. However, while these plans reflect some interagency collaboration—for example, in assessing country needs for development assistance—the agencies' plans are focused on their respective missions and do not comprise an integrated strategy addressing TSCTP activities in all nine countries.

- Disagreements about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries has hampered implementation of some activities. The agencies agree that State is responsible for the security and coordination of all U.S. government executive branch personnel assigned to all diplomatic and consular posts abroad, except for personnel under the command of a U.S. military commander, and that DOD is responsible for all activities carried out by military personnel deployed by a combatant commander. However, in some partner countries, agency officials have disagreed about whether some DOD personnel carrying out TSCTP activities should be subject to State's authority. For example, in one country, State and DOD officials disagreed about the number of DOD personnel to be permitted in the country; this disagreement contributed to DOD's suspension of some of its activities. According to agency officials, such disagreements cannot be resolved at the country level and require higher-level guidance or intervention.
- Fluctuation in the distribution of funds for TSCTP activities has limited USAID's implementation of its activities in Mali. USAID received funds for its TSCTP activities in Mali in 2005 and 2007, but not in 2006. Because it received no funds for 2006, the mission suspended a peace-building program in northern Mali.
- The agencies have few common mechanisms for measuring their TSCTP activities' outcomes—that is, the results of the products and services delivered. The agencies have some indicators to measure their activities' outputs—that is, direct products and services—such as the number of foreign military personnel trained. However, they generally do not measure their activities' outcomes, such as any decrease in extremism in the targeted regions. According to State, USAID, and DOD officials, they are working to develop indicators to assess their activities' outcomes.

To enhance U.S. agencies' ability to collaborate in strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology in northwest Africa, we recommend that the Secretary

of State work through the Director of Foreign Assistance, who serves concurrently as USAID Administrator, to develop a comprehensive strategy for TSCTP in conjunction with the Secretaries of Defense and the Treasury, the U.S. Attorney General, and the heads of any other participating agencies. In addition, we recommend that the Secretaries of State and Defense issue joint guidance regarding DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries.

Commenting on a draft of this report, State and USAID concurred, and DOD partially concurred, with our findings and recommendations (see app. III, IV, and V, respectively). Regarding our recommendation that State and DOD develop and issue joint guidance with regard to DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries, DOD commented that it believes sufficient guidance exists in U.S. government documents defining the agencies' respective authorities. We made some clarifications in response to DOD's comments but maintain that joint guidance is needed to resolve the agencies' existing disagreements over implementation of their authorities in some TSCTP countries. State, USAID, DOD, and the Department of Justice provided technical corrections, which we incorporated where appropriate.

Background

Through TSCTP, the U.S. government aims to strengthen country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibit the spread of extremist ideology in northwest Africa. Since its launch in 2005, TSCTP has operated in nine countries (see fig. 1), and it may expand to include others.

Figure 1: Northwestern African Countries Participating in Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership



Sources: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and DOD data; Art Explosion (images).

TSCTP was conceived as an interagency program, with State, USAID, and DOD primarily responsible for diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities, respectively, and with State as the program lead. In each country participating in the program, a country team led by, and under the authority of, the Ambassador coordinates the implementation of U.S. foreign assistance in the country, including TSCTP activities.⁸ The country teams include representatives from State, USAID, and DOD, among other agencies. Within State, the Bureau of African Affairs is the lead coordinator for TSCTP activities conducted by several bureaus,⁹ as shown in figure 2. USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, in Washington, D.C., manages the agency's TSCTP activities with support from its regional office in Accra, Ghana, as well as USAID overseas mission offices in some TSCTP countries. DOD's Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is responsible for coordinating the agency's TSCTP activities.¹⁰ In addition, DOD representatives under the authority of the department's U.S. European Command (EUCOM) participate with the country team in coordinating and implementing the agency's TSCTP military activities.¹¹

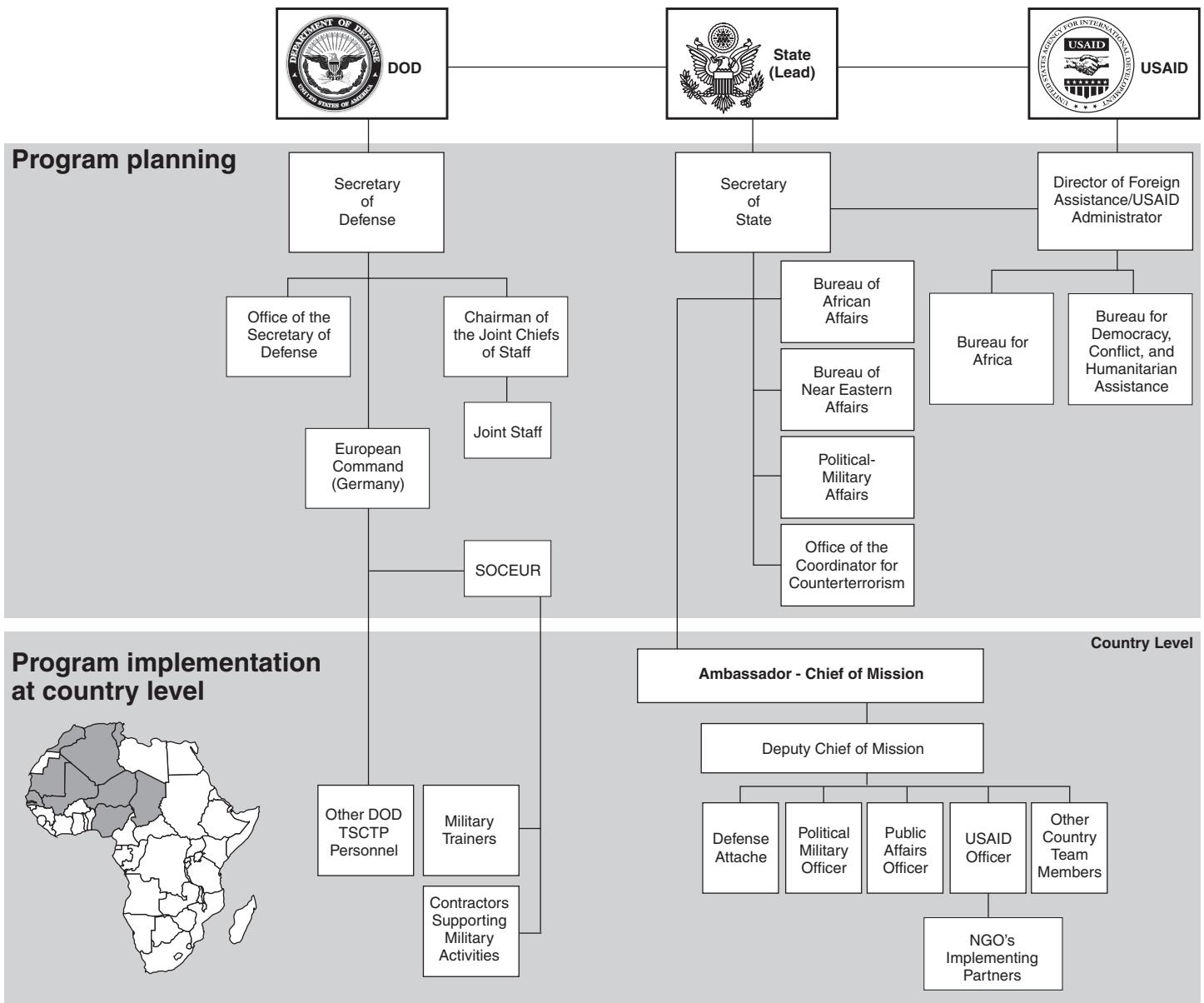
⁸Country teams in embassies are made up of key figures from the State Department and other agencies that work under the direction of the ambassador and meet regularly to share information and coordinate their actions.

⁹Although State's Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) is charged with developing coordinated strategies to defeat terrorists abroad, S/CT has not been charged with developing a strategy for TSCTP.

¹⁰OSD's Office of African Affairs oversees DOD's TSCTP activities, provides policy and guidance to EUCOM, and interfaces with other U.S. agencies in TSCTP implementation.

¹¹EUCOM's Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS) is DOD's component of TSCTP. In October 2008, execution authority for OEF-TS will transition from EUCOM to the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

Figure 2: Overview of Key Agencies Participating in TSCTP



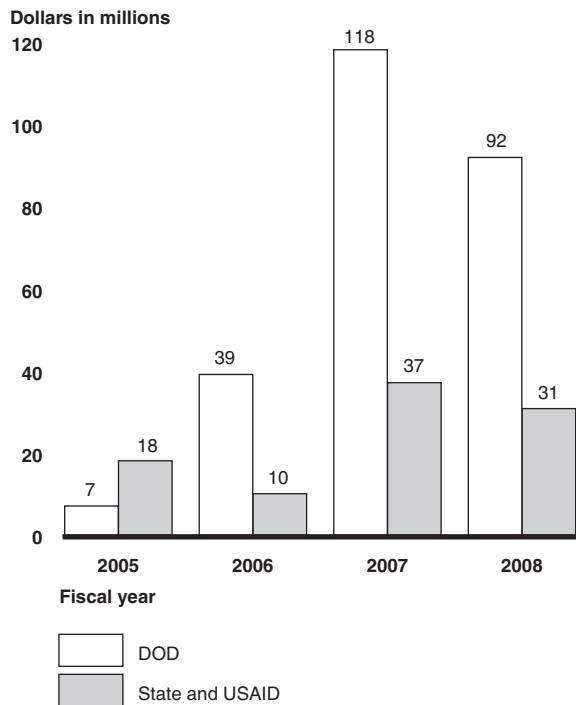
Sources: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and DOD data; Art Explosion (images).

In 2005 through 2007, the key agencies participating in TSCTP obligated about \$230 million for TSCTP activities.¹² For 2008, the agencies' commitments for TSCTP amounted to approximately \$123 million. (See fig. 3.) TSCTP is not directly funded by Congress, but is funded at the agencies' discretion from various appropriation accounts, such as the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) fund; Economic Support Funds (ESF); the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs; and Section 1206 and 1207 funds.¹³ (See app. II for more information about the agencies' funding for TSCTP.)

¹²See appendix I for a description of our methodology for obtaining these data and assessing their reliability.

¹³Because no specific congressional authorization or appropriation exists for TSCTP, State, USAID, and DOD fund their TSCTP activities through multiple accounts. State requested funds for TSCTP as a line item in the 2009 Congressional Budget Justification; the request included funds for USAID, which is included in State's budgetary process. DOD has designated funds for TSCTP for 2008 through 2012, including funds from the Sections 1206 and 1207 accounts, which it provides to State and USAID. See appendix II for more information.

Figure 3: TSCTP Obligations and Commitments by Year and Key Agency, 2005-2008



Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and DOD data.

Notes:

The amounts shown include obligations for 2005-2007 and commitments for 2008. Commitments shown for 2008 are based on agencies' projections as of June 2008.

Because the Director of Foreign Assistance determines funding for both State and USAID, we have combined State's and USAID's TSCTP funding in this figure. In addition, funding that DOD provided to State and USAID from the Sections 1206 and 1207 accounts are included in the obligations and commitments shown for DOD.

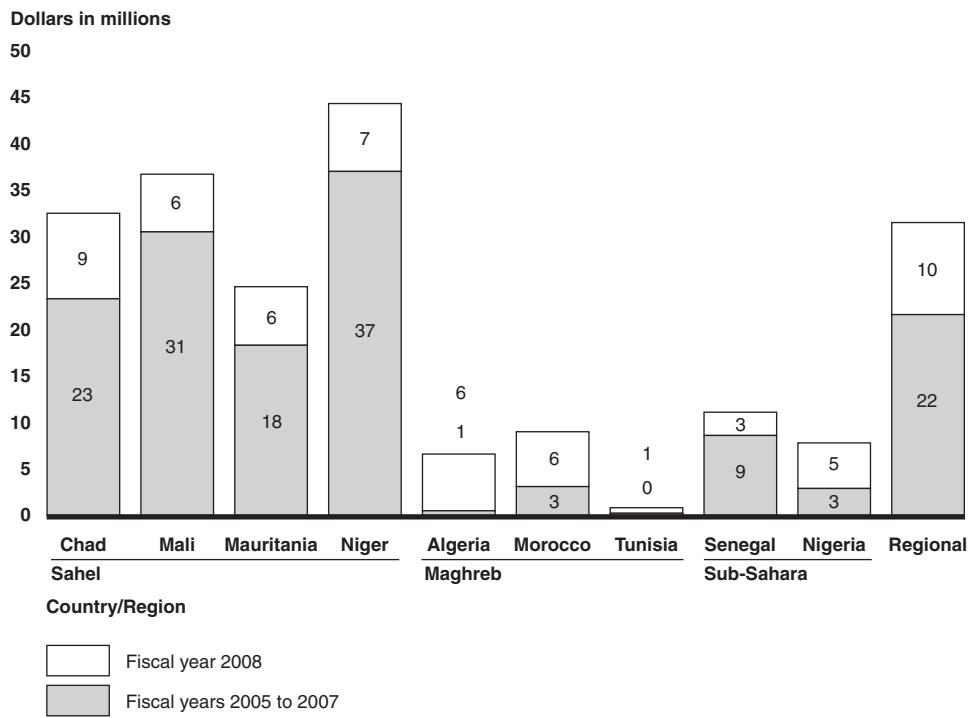
Funds for TSCTP Were Distributed Primarily in the Sahel Region and Support a Range of Diplomacy, Development Assistance, and Military Activities

Distribution of TSCTP Obligations Has Focused on the Sahel Region

The distribution of funds for TSCTP has varied among regions, with the majority of obligations in 2005 through 2007 distributed to the Sahel region. State, USAID, and DOD have supported a range of diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities aimed at strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology.

About 74 percent of the \$230 million obligated for 2005 through 2007 was distributed to Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, in the Sahel region; about 3 percent to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, in the Maghreb region; and about 8 percent to Nigeria and Senegal, in sub-Saharan. The remaining 15 percent of the obligations for 2005 through 2007 was distributed through regional assistance, such as military exercises, to support TSCTP objectives in multiple countries. For 2008, as of June 2008, the agencies expected to distribute about 49 percent of total commitments for TSCTP to the countries of the Sahel region; 21 percent to the countries of the Maghreb region; 13 percent to the Sub-Saharan countries; and 17 percent for regional assistance. (See fig. 4.)

Figure 4: TSCTP Obligations and Commitments by Country and Region, 2005-2008



Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and DOD data.

Notes:

The amounts shown represent the agencies' obligations for 2005-2007 and commitments for 2008. The commitments shown for 2008 are based on projections by State, USAID, and DOD as of June 2008.

The obligated amount shown in the column labeled "Regional" was distributed through assistance efforts that support TSCTP objectives in multiple countries.

In addition to the obligations shown, \$147 million was obligated for program support costs for all TSCTP partner countries, including administrative and related personnel costs and air lift support.

Agency officials indicated that the differences in the distribution of obligations and commitments for TSCTP partner countries of the Sahel and the Maghreb regions related, respectively, to countries' capacity to absorb the assistance and their willingness to receive it. In the Sahel, for example, the Nigerien military is fighting a rebellion in the northern part of the country and therefore has limited capacity to receive TSCTP military training, according to U.S. embassy officials in Niger. According to DOD officials, a lack of needed resources, such as jet fuel, also has limited the capacity of some countries in the Sahel to receive military training. In the

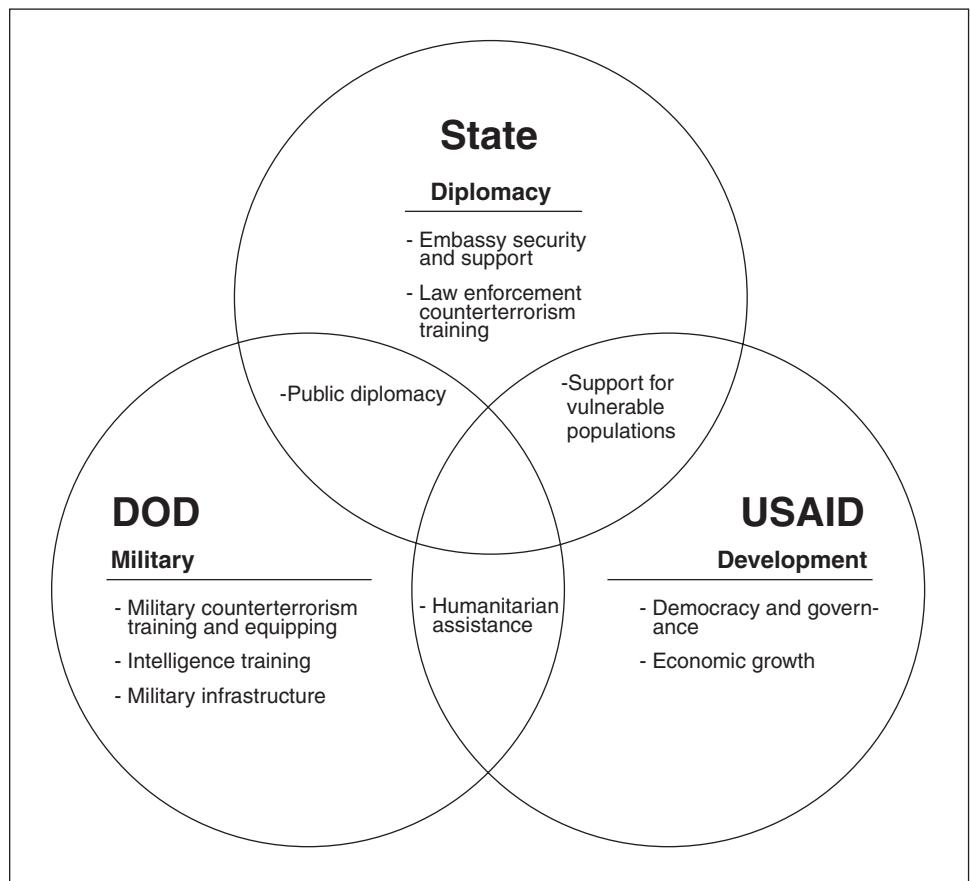
Maghreb, the Algerian government has expressed unwillingness to receive TSCTP military training, according to embassy and State officials.

U.S. Agencies Have Supported Diplomacy, Development Assistance, and Military Activities

The key agencies have supported various types of activities in support of TSCTP goals,¹⁴ with State primarily focused on diplomacy, USAID on development assistance, and DOD on military activities. Figure 5 illustrates the types of TSCTP activities that each agency supports.

¹⁴In addition to conducting TSCTP activities, each agency conducts other activities that support U.S. counterterrorism goals in northwest Africa.

Figure 5: Overview of Key Agencies' TSCTP Activities



Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and DOD data.

State's TSCTP Activities

State leads public diplomacy efforts, provides embassy security and support for TSCTP activities, and supports some counterterrorism training for law enforcement officers. Examples of State's TSCTP activities include the following:

- **Public diplomacy.** State works to communicate messages among vulnerable populations to isolate and marginalize violent extremists. In addition, State works to foster a sense of common interests and values between Americans and people of different countries and cultures. For example, Morocco, Algeria, and Nigeria are all hosting educational and cultural exchange programs.

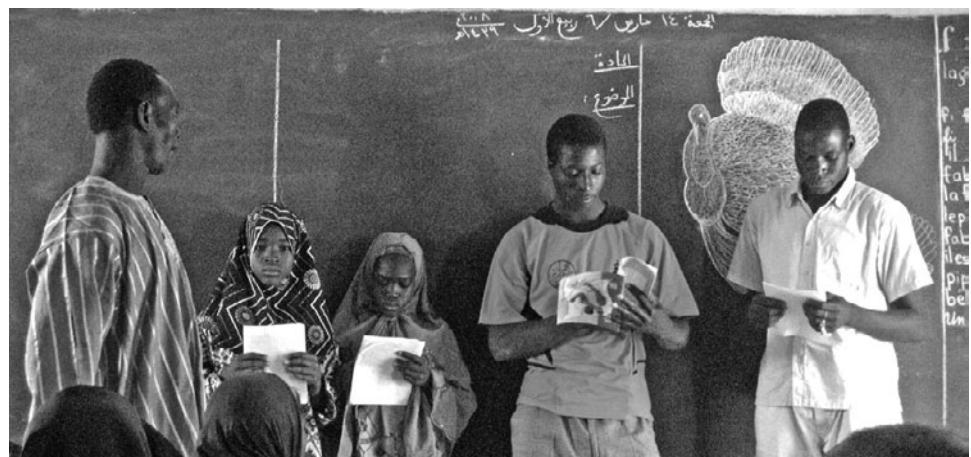
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- **Embassy security and support.** In some cases, State provides security, logistical, and personnel support services, as well as office space at U.S. embassies, to support DOD and USAID personnel implementing TSCTP activities. In addition, State serves as the lead in diplomatic discussions with host-country governments to facilitate TSCTP activities.
 - **Law enforcement counterterrorism training.** State's regional security officers oversee the training of friendly governments' civilian security and law enforcement personnel in police procedures that address terrorism. For example, in Niger, the police forces received training courses to help combat terrorism. In addition, State provides funding in support of mobile training and military intelligence conducted by DOD.

USAID's TSCTP Activities

USAID supports development assistance intended to promote good governance, provides economic opportunities, and engages populations vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Examples of USAID's TSCTP activities include the following:

- **Democracy and governance.** USAID supports efforts to improve communication, and improve education and health, to help promote legitimate authority in the region's vast, lightly-populated areas where government presence is minimal. For example, USAID provided training and support in democracy and governance for elected local officials in Chad and Niger in remote areas. In addition, in Mali, USAID supports basic education programs in schools to engage youths and promote messages of tolerance. (See fig. 6.)

Figure 6: Students Receiving Instruction in a USAID-supported School in Mali



Source: GAO.

- **Economic growth.** USAID supports alternatives to illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, trafficking in humans, and banditry that can provide financing for terrorist or extremist activities. For example, in Niger, USAID is working with the United Nations Development Program to reintegrate more than 3,000 ex-rebel fighters into civil society.
- **Support for vulnerable populations.** USAID supports programs that encourage market-driven job training and job creation for youth through market-driven vocational education, microfinance apprenticeships, and coaching and mentoring. For example, USAID has provided rural radios to target vulnerable regions in Niger and Mali by broadcasting moderate views and providing information on government services.

DOD's TSCTP Activities

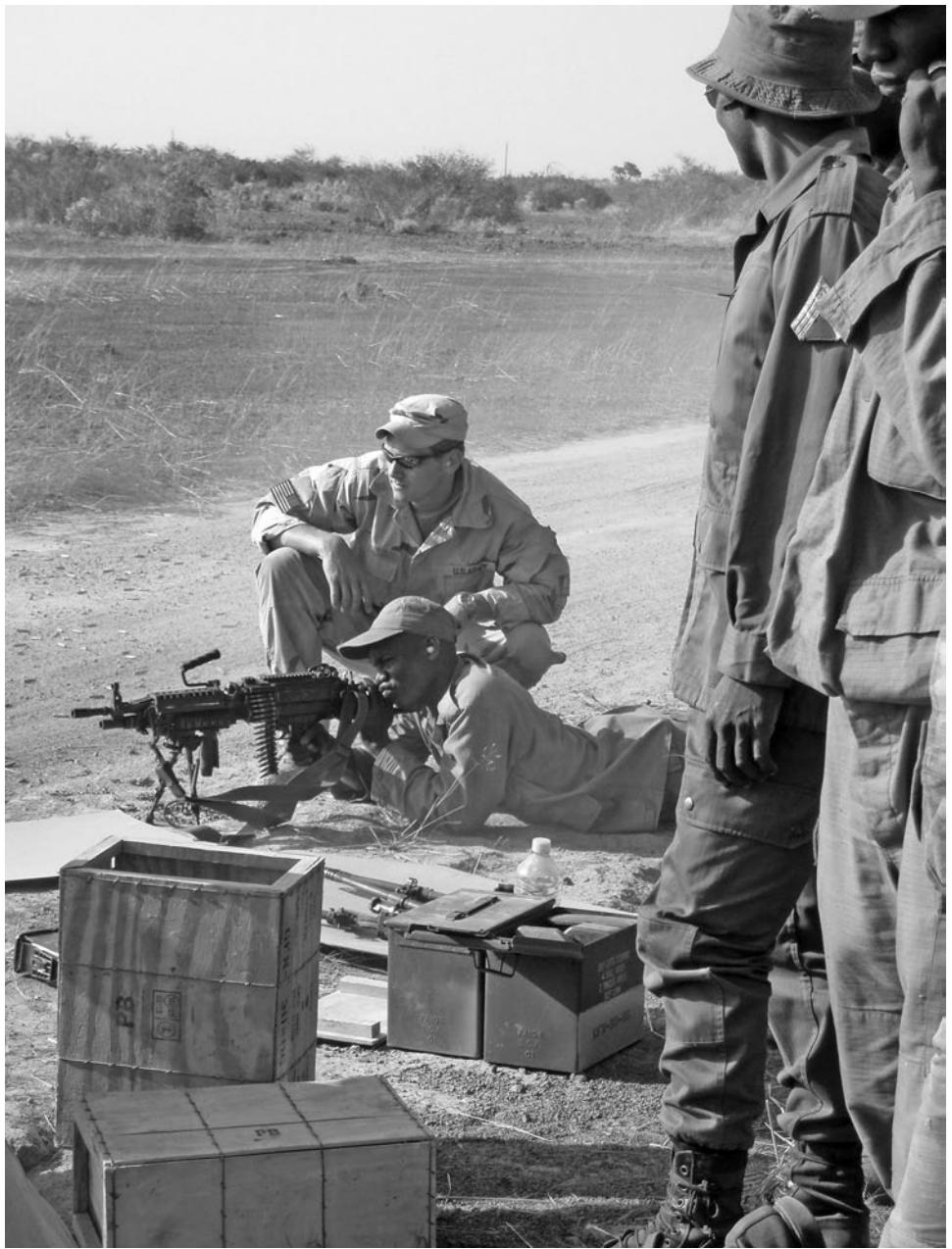
DOD provides basic training and equipment to foreign militaries to combat terrorism, provides military infrastructure, conducts intelligence training, engages in some humanitarian assistance, and supports State's public diplomacy efforts. Examples of DOD's TSCTP activities include the following:

- **Military counterterrorism training and equipment.** DOD provides basic training—for example, in marksmanship and border patrol—and

distributes equipment such as vehicles to the militaries of partner countries.¹⁵ For instance, EUCOM conducts an annual military exercise to provide specialized counterterrorism training and to foster communication and cultural exchange between military counterparts. (See fig. 7.)

¹⁵ Equipment is provided to militaries of TSCTP partner countries through State-funded programs and is distributed by DOD personnel in the partner countries.

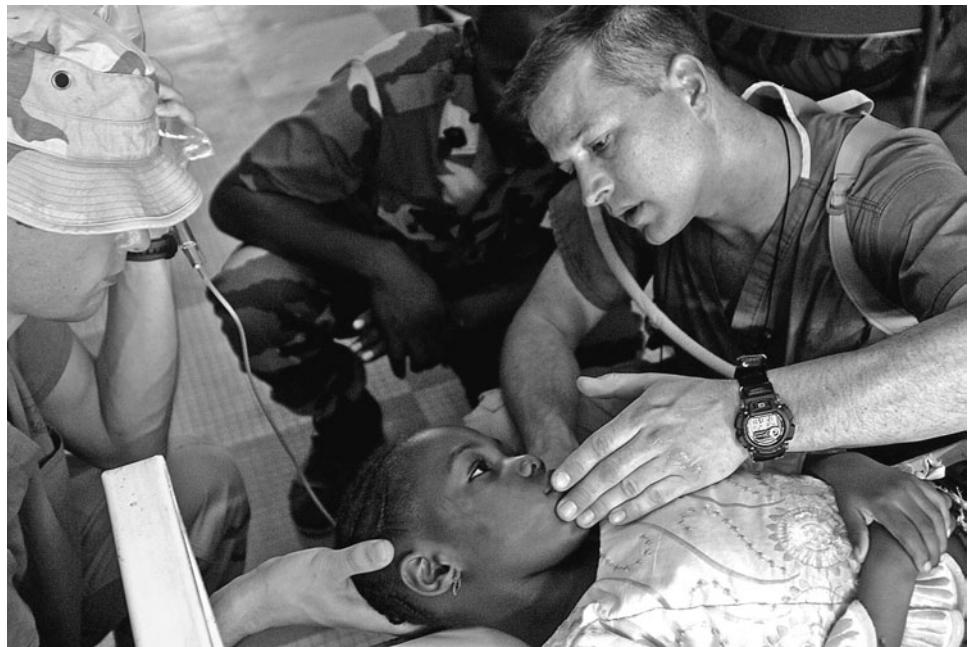
Figure 7: DOD Representative Trains African Military Units



Source: DOD.

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- **Military infrastructure.** DOD provides military infrastructure, such as storage and training facilities, and systems designed to foster communication and cultural exchanges between militaries. For example, DOD constructed a military training facility in northern Niger to enhance the capabilities of the military.
 - **Intelligence training.** DOD provides military intelligence training in partner countries to support military counterterrorism and border security operations. The training is intended to help build the countries' intelligence capacity and establish regional intelligence working groups.
 - **Humanitarian assistance.** DOD assists partner countries' infrastructure development and addresses humanitarian needs. For example, DOD helps to construct wells and schools and provides medical services to indigenous populations. In addition, DOD started a program in Mauritania to educate the local population in landmine awareness and risks. (See fig. 8.)

Figure 8: DOD Representative Provides Humanitarian Assistance



Source: DOD.

- **Public diplomacy.** DOD works with State to support public diplomacy and information programs in partner countries. For example, DOD promoted governance activities such as a voter registration drive in

Mauritania. DOD is also funding internet initiatives to foster communication between TSCTP country governments and among key agencies implementing TSCTP activities and to promote moderate political messages to the public in partner countries. Furthermore, DOD has worked in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania to help these countries minimize terrorist recruiting and influence.

Several Challenges Have Hampered Implementation of TSCTP Activities

Several factors have hampered the key agencies' ability to collaboratively implement TSCTP activities, in some cases limiting their ability to achieve or assess progress in combating terrorism and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology.¹⁶ First, no comprehensive, integrated strategy has been developed to guide the agencies' activities, and documents used in planning program activities have not included some elements that we have identified as needed in an interagency counterterrorism program's strategic plan. Second, despite some collaboration at the headquarters level, disagreement between State and DOD about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries has contributed to the suspension of some of these activities. Third, fluctuation in the distribution of obligations for TSCTP in Mali resulted in the suspension of some program activities. Fourth, although the agencies have indicators to measure activities' direct results, the agencies have not yet developed the capability to measure and report on overall progress toward program goals.

No Comprehensive Strategy Guides Implementation of TSCTP

The agencies lack a comprehensive, integrated strategy to guide their implementation of TSCTP. Our previous work has shown the importance, in particular, of developing a strategy that identifies goals, objectives, priorities, and milestones as well as resource needed for interagency efforts to combat terrorism. According to DOD and State officials,

¹⁶Our previous work identified the following practices, among others, that can help agencies enhance and sustain large-scale efforts, such as counterterrorism programs, where interagency collaboration is essential: (1) establish a strategy that clearly defines goals, objectives, priorities, and milestones, among other elements; (2) define and agree on roles and responsibilities, including how the collaborative effort will be led, and establish compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agency boundaries; (3) identify resource needs and deploy available resources; and (4) develop mechanisms to monitor and evaluate results. See GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005); *Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, GAO-04-408T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004). See page 46 of this report for a listing of these products and other related GAO work.

developing an interagency strategic plan has been identified as a priority at annual TSCTP conferences, including the most recent conference in March 2008;¹⁷ however, as of June 2008, the agencies had not developed such a strategy.

State and DOD officials reported using two documents to plan their TSCTP activities: a 2004 document outlining a regional effort to counter terrorism in the Sahel and Maghreb and a 2005 document defining the program's purpose and projecting resource needs. The documents identify some agency activities related to the program's general purpose and acknowledge the agencies' primary responsibilities for these activities. However, the documents lack some key elements that we have previously found to be needed in a large, interagency effort's strategic plan. For example, the documents do not clearly articulate or list the program's goals; our review of these and other agency documents suggested goals that agency officials confirmed as those of TSCTP.¹⁸ In addition, the 2004 and 2005 TSCTP planning documents do not prioritize proposed activities or identify milestones that could be used to measure progress or make improvements. Moreover, the documents do not identify or provide guidance for selecting countries for the program; reassessing and adjusting program goals in response to any alterations in the level of threat; or determining when countries in the program no longer require assistance. In addition, the documents do not define the agency's specific roles with respect to achieving the program's goals. Further, the projections of resource needs have not been updated to account for variations in available funds given State's and USAID's 2-year budget cycle.¹⁹

State, USAID, and DOD have developed separate plans related to their respective TSCTP activities. Although these plans reflect some interagency collaboration, they do not provide an integrated, comprehensive approach to guide TSCTP overall.

¹⁷State, USAID, and DOD rotate responsibility for hosting an annual TSCTP conference; DOD hosted the March 2008 conference in Germany.

¹⁸After reviewing these and other agency documents and conferring with agency officials, we derived the following as TSCTP goals: (1) strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities; (2) enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security forces; (3) denying support and sanctuary through strategically targeted development assistance; (4) promoting good governance; (5) discrediting terrorist ideology; and (6) reinforcing bilateral military ties.

¹⁹State and USAID follow a 2-year budget process, in which bureaus' funding requests are submitted 2 years prior to appropriation and obligation of funds.

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- At U.S. embassies, the country teams—led by the ambassador and including State, USAID, and DOD representatives—have developed bilateral country-level plans identifying embassy priorities and goals, known as mission strategic plans (MSP), for each of the partner countries. The nine MSPs for 2009 that we reviewed include counterterrorism objectives as priority goals, but none of the nine reflect detailed planning for TSCTP activities. State reported that it plans to develop country assistance strategies to coordinate all U.S. assistance in the partner countries, but no such strategies had been developed for the TSCTP partner countries as of June 2008.
 - USAID reported using a series of strategic assessments for the Sahel countries to identify development assistance activities that could support TSCTP. A USAID official stated that these assessments were developed in cooperation with DOD and U.S. embassies; however, the assessments address only USAID activities. Further, the USAID assessments focus only on the four countries in the Sahel—Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger—where USAID has provided substantial development assistance.
 - DOD has developed operational plans, known as country action plans (CAP), for TSCTP activities²⁰ in each of the nine countries. The CAPs identify the objectives of proposed military activities for each country but also point to objectives outlined in State's MSPs. According to DOD officials, in 2007, EUCOM officials began traveling to TSCTP country teams to coordinate CAPs with the embassy mission teams in an effort to secure embassy support for planned TSCTP activities. However, the CAPs remain specific to DOD's military operations in each country. Moreover, as of June 2008, none of the nine partner countries' CAPs had been approved by the ambassadors in those countries, and only two country teams, Niger and Mauritania, had held country-level CAP discussions. According to a DOD official, in 2007, the Niger country team failed to reach agreement regarding the CAP. A State official noted that an April 2008 discussion of the Mauritania CAP helped to improve coordination among DOD and State officials.

²⁰DOD also produces multiple plans to address the military goals and objectives for the Global and Regional War on Terror.

Disagreement on Authority over DOD Personnel Has Hampered Some TSCTP Activities

Although State, USAID, and DOD have undertaken efforts to collaborate in implementing TSCTP, disagreements about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries have hampered some TSCTP activities. Previously, we have found that for large-scale interagency efforts in which collaboration is essential, agencies should work together to define and agree on roles and responsibilities, including how the collaborative effort will be led. We have also found that—to enable a cohesive working relationship and create the mutual trust required to enhance and sustain the collaborative effort—agencies should establish compatible policies to operate across agency boundaries.

The three agencies meet regularly to discuss TSCTP in Washington, D.C., and with DOD officials stationed at EUCOM in Germany, according to State and DOD officials. For example, agency representatives hold monthly video conferences to discuss TSCTP priorities and activities. In addition, an annual conference brings U.S. embassy officials from the partner countries, as well as from agency headquarters in Washington and from EUCOM, to discuss past, present, and future TSCTP operations. However, according to agency representatives, agreements reached at these meetings have not always been implemented in some partner countries.

Written statements from State and DOD show disagreement about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries. The agencies agree that State is responsible for the security and coordination of all U.S. government executive branch personnel assigned to all diplomatic and consular posts abroad, except for personnel under the command of a U.S. military commander, and that DOD is responsible for all activities carried out by military personnel deployed by a combatant commander. However, although acknowledging that DOD personnel²¹ who report to EUCOM are not directly subject to the embassy's authority, State asserts that, because these personnel seek clearance from the ambassador to enter the country to conduct TSCTP activities, they are subject to the ambassador's supervision while in the country. DOD asserts that because these personnel are under the EUCOM commander's direct authority, they

²¹These DOD personnel do not include individuals already considered to be under embassy Chief of Missions' authority, such as Defense Attachés and Security Assistance Officers.

are not under the ambassador's authority although they actively seek to coordinate with the ambassador.

Several DOD officials told us that the disagreements about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities have affected implementation of DOD's activities in Niger and Chad. In Niger, according to DOD officials, the agency suspended most of its TSCTP activities in 2007 after the Ambassador limited the number of DOD personnel allowed to enter the country. State officials said that these limits were set in part because of embassy concerns about the country's fragile political environment as well as limited space and staff available to support DOD personnel deployed to TSCTP partner countries.²² In Chad, according to DOD officials, the ambassador recently called for a "strategic pause" in implementing TSCTP activities, stating the need to reassess available embassy personnel to support DOD activities in country.²³

Disagreements between the agencies regarding authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries cannot be officially resolved by the country teams, according to State and DOD officials. Lacking guidance from agency headquarters, country team officials have tried to establish agreements between State and DOD; for instance, DOD personnel have signed memorandums of understanding with some embassies to facilitate their TSCTP activities. However, some of these agreements were concluded without the consent of higher offices within DOD, such as the Office of Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and therefore are not considered valid by DOD. An embassy official in Mauritania recently requested higher-level guidance regarding authority over the DOD personnel who report to EUCOM. State officials noted that although the Bureau of African Affairs is the designated lead of TSCTP, the bureau official charged with TSCTP operations is subordinate in rank to the ambassadors of partner countries and therefore lacks sufficient authority to mediate the disagreements with

²²According to a DOD official, DOD personnel are not required to operate within a U.S. embassy compound, and in some countries, DOD has operations and facilities outside the embassies.

²³When a rebellion in Chad began, the embassy was evacuated and all U.S. government personnel were withdrawn. Since the evacuation of U.S. personnel from Chad, the embassy has reopened and plans for TSCTP activities are being reevaluated.

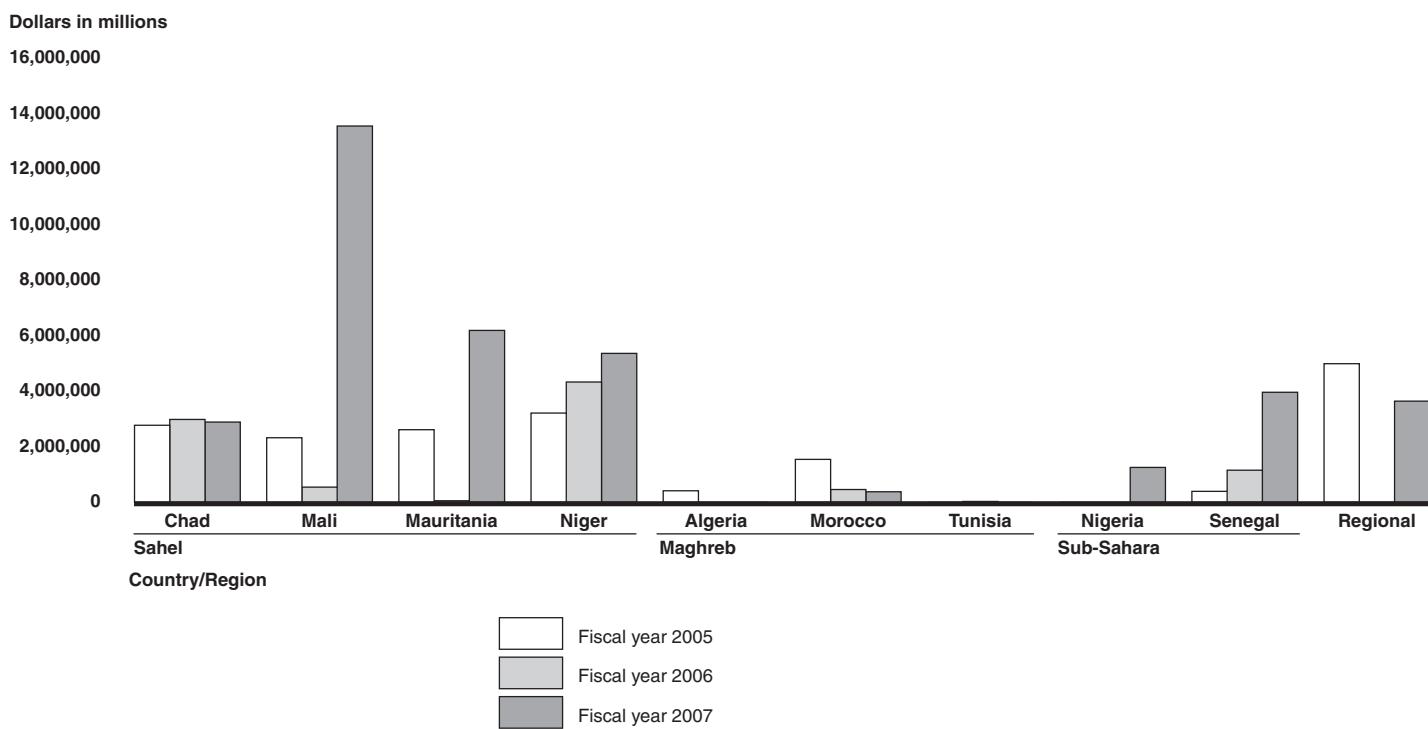
DOD. DOD officials expressed concern that program activities may continue to be hampered if the agencies' disagreements are not resolved.

Fluctuation in the Distribution of Funds Has Hampered Implementation

Fluctuation in the distribution of funds for TSCTP activities has hampered USAID's implementation of activities in Mali. Our previous work has shown that for large interagency counterterrorism efforts, agencies should identify resource needs and deploy available resources to address these needs.

As figure 9 shows, the distribution of funds for State and USAID TSCTP activities has fluctuated over time in some countries, most significantly in Mali.

Figure 9: Distribution of Funds for State and USAID TSCTP Activities by Country and Year, 2005-2007



Note: Embassy officials in Mauritania stated that the reduced distribution of funds for 2006 primarily resulted from a U.S. decision to curtail its activities following a political coup in Mauritania in 2005.

According to a USAID official, the fluctuation in funds for Mali has made it difficult to plan over the medium to long term. Although USAID received the funds it had requested to support TSCTP activities in Mali for 2005 and 2007,²⁴ it received no funds to obligate for TSCTP activities in Mali in 2006. Because it received no funds for 2006, the mission suspended a peace-building program in northern Mali. USAID officials noted that the inability to continue these activities caused the Mali government to question somewhat the agency's commitment to conducting TSCTP activities in the country.

Measurement of Progress toward TSCTP Goals Has Been Limited

Although the agencies have developed indicators to measure their TSCTP activities' outputs—their direct products and services—they have not developed common indicators to measure the activities' outcomes—the results of the products and services provided. Our previous work has shown that developing common mechanisms to evaluate outcomes is important to improving the effectiveness of large interagency efforts to combat terrorism.

The agencies have developed performance indicators to measure their TSCTP activities' outputs. However, because of the lack of common indicators to measure their activities' outcomes, agency officials are limited in their ability to determine progress toward program goals and identify needed improvements.²⁵

- U.S. embassies use performance indicators to measure the outputs of their counterterrorism activities and report on them annually to State headquarters in Washington, D.C. However, the embassies do not measure the outcomes of their TSCTP activities.
- USAID works with organizations implementing its TSCTP activities to identify and establish performance indicators to measure the activities' outputs.

²⁴Some of the 2007 obligations for USAID's TSCTP activities in Mali were provided through the Section 1207 account, which allows DOD to transfer funds to State for reconstruction, security, or stabilization assistance in a foreign country.

²⁵Previously, we have found that federal agencies engaged in collaborative efforts need to create the means to monitor and evaluate their efforts to enable them to identify areas for improvement. We also found that reporting on activities can help key decision makers within the agencies, as well as clients and stakeholders, to obtain feedback for improving both policy and operational effectiveness. See [GAO-06-15](#).

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- DOD uses indicators such as the amount of equipment provided and the number of foreign military personnel trained through TSCTP activities to measure the outputs of its TSCTP activities. In addition, DOD has conducted surveys to determine the effect of its activities on local populations' attitudes and perceptions.

State, USAID, and DOD officials acknowledged the need for, and are working to develop, common indicators that demonstrate progress toward TSCTP goals. For example, to facilitate the development of indicators linked to the goal of inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology, USAID recently hired a contractor to identify the root causes of terrorism and extremism in Africa. State, USAID, and DOD officials stated that the results of the study could be useful in their efforts to develop common indicators of TSCTP activities' outcomes. However, agency officials noted the difficulty of measuring how certain activities, such as building wells or providing radios, may contribute to the achievement of TSCTP goals.

A 2007 report by the Congressional Research Service acknowledges the difficulty of measuring progress in combating terrorism.²⁶ The report notes that a common difficulty in demonstrating success in combating terrorism is an overreliance on quantitative data—particularly those that may correlate with progress but not accurately measure it, such as the amount of money spent on counterterrorism efforts—without considering its qualitative significance. According to the report, an alternative for measuring progress in combating terrorism might involve analyzing data on the numbers, magnitude, impact and significance of terrorist incidents; public attitudes in targeted countries or regions; and trends in incidents, attitudes, and other factors over time. The report also notes that agencies' lack of common criteria, as well as uncertainty with respect to strategies and measurements, makes it difficult to describe and demonstrate progress.

Conclusion

In supporting diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities aimed at strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology in northwest Africa, the key agencies implementing TSCTP have undertaken an important effort to meet U.S. national security goals. However, the lack of a comprehensive,

²⁶Congressional Research Service, *Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness* (Washington, D.C.: 2007).

integrated strategy that identifies program goals and objectives, defines agreed-on agency roles and responsibilities, and identifies resources needed to achieve the program goals may limit the agencies' ability to enhance and sustain this large-scale, interagency effort to combat terrorism. Moreover, without guidance from agency headquarters, continued disagreements about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSTCP activities in the partner countries could further hamper TSCTP's implementation. In addition, fluctuation in the distribution of State's and USAID's obligations may continue to affect the implementation of TSCTP activities. Finally, without common indicators of their activities' outcomes, the agencies will continue to have limited ability to measure overall progress in combating terrorism. Given the growing threat of terrorism in northwest Africa, as well as the possibility of TSCTP's expansion to other countries and agencies, addressing these factors is essential to strengthening U.S. agencies' collaborative efforts to combat terrorism in the region.

Recommendations

To enhance U.S. agencies' ability to collaborate in strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology in northwest Africa, we recommend that the Secretary of State work through the Director of Foreign Assistance, who serves concurrently as USAID Administrator, to develop a comprehensive strategy for the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership in conjunction with the Secretaries of Defense and the Treasury, the U.S. Attorney General, and the heads of any other partner agencies. The strategy should include clear goals, objectives, and milestones, including output and outcome indicators, and identify resources needed to achieve the program's goals.

We also recommend that the Secretaries of State and Defense develop and issue joint guidance with regard to DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

State, USAID, and DOD provided written comments about a draft of this report, which we have reproduced in appendixes III, IV, and V, respectively. In addition, State, USAID, DOD, and the Department of Justice provided technical corrections, which we incorporated as appropriate.

State agreed with our report's findings and recommendations. State noted that our recommendation regarding the importance of a comprehensive

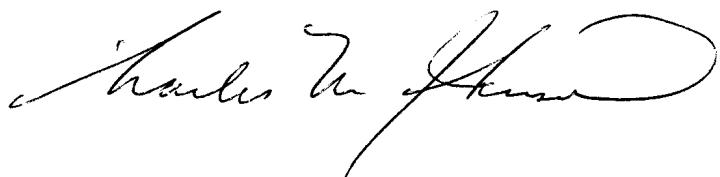
TSCTP strategy is consistent with its view that the core strategy developed in 2005 would benefit from updates on issues such as the analysis of the counterterrorism challenge presented by the region, the funding levels and prioritization of available U.S. and non-U.S. resources, and the methodology used to evaluate program performance. State also commented that our report's recommendation concerning the importance of guidance on the appropriate integration of Department of Defense (DOD) personnel into the U.S. missions in TSCTP countries identifies an important issue. State observed that if a Chief of Mission and the area military commander are unable to reach agreement, they may refer the issue to the Secretaries of State and Defense for resolution.

USAID likewise agreed with our findings and recommendations. USAID noted that our recommendations reinforce its efforts to encourage interagency collaboration and create efficiencies in implementation.

DOD agreed with most of our findings and recommendations. However, DOD stated that it partially concurred with the recommendation regarding developing and issuing joint guidance with regard to DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries. Specifically, DOD believes that sufficient guidance exists in the government documents that define the authorities of DOD's Combatant Commander (COCOM) and State's Chief of Mission (COM). However, DOD noted that issuing joint guidance reflecting the implications of the shift to a greater DOD emphasis and support in shaping and deter operations would be helpful to both COCOMs and COMs in the TSCTP region. We added information about State's and DOD's authority in the report, but we maintain that joint guidance is needed to resolve existing disagreements over implementation of the agencies' respective authorities in some TSCTP countries.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees. We will also make copies of available to others on request. In addition, this report is available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VI.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Michael Johnson, Jr."

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report examines (1) the distribution of funds for TSCTP in 2005 through 2008 and the types of activities supported and (2) the program's implementation, including the extent to which it has been guided by a comprehensive, integrated strategy. We performed our work from June 2007 through July 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

In conducting our work, we interviewed representatives of the Departments of State (State), Defense (DOD), Justice, and the Treasury and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Washington, D.C., and of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) in Stuttgart, Germany. During site visits to three TSCTP partner countries, we visited a U.S.-funded military facility in Mali and we met with numerous Malian, Mauritanian, and Moroccan government and military officials. We also met with some nongovernmental organization representatives implementing TSCTP activities on behalf of the U.S. government. In selecting the countries we would visit, we considered the following criteria: funding allocations, geographic distribution, the number and duration of TSCTP activities in the country, and TSCTP representatives' recommendations. We also met with participants of the 2008 Annual TSCTP conference hosted by EUCOM in Garmisch, Germany, in March 2008.

To identify the agencies' obligations and commitments of funds for TSCTP for 2005 through 2008, we reviewed relevant laws that have appropriated funds for accounts supporting TSCTP. We asked State, DOD, and USAID officials to provide obligations for TSCTP activities by country and account for 2005 through 2007. We also received information on the agencies' commitments for TSCTP activities for 2008. We collected and reviewed the information and noted that there is no central repository for TSCTP funds, because the program is supported by funds from multiple accounts. Owing to the limitations of the data, we rounded the figures up to the nearest millions of dollars. We also reviewed and compared State, USAID, and DOD documents to verify the accuracy of the data provided by the agencies. Based on the checks performed and the assessment of the data, we believe that the data are sufficiently reliable to support general conclusions about State's and USAID's total obligations and commitments by year and also by country and are therefore sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. To identify the TSCTP activities implemented by U.S. government agencies, we collected and reviewed relevant documents from State, USAID, and DOD as well as the Department of the Treasury. We also interviewed relevant officials from the State, DOD, and USAID and the intelligence community. At State, we interviewed officials from the

Bureau of African Affairs, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs; we also met with officials from the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism and the Office of the Foreign Assistance. At USAID, we met with officials from the Bureau for Africa. At DOD, we interviewed officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, U.S. European Command, U.S. Special Operations Command—Europe, and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

To examine the agencies' implementation of TSCTP, including the extent to which it has been guided by a comprehensive, integrated strategy, we collected and reviewed U.S. government strategy documents and evaluated them against GAO-identified criteria for an interagency strategy. At the U.S. government level, we reviewed the National Security Strategy, the *National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, and two key documents establishing the TSCTP. We also reviewed agencies' respective strategy documents. For State, we reviewed 2008 and 2009 Mission Strategic Plans (MSP) for all nine partner countries and the *Country Reports on Terrorism*. For DOD, we reviewed the Contingency Plan (CONPLAN) 7500, the OEF-TS Phase-2 Executive Order, and Country Action Plans (CAP) for some partner countries. For USAID, we reviewed USAID strategy documents, including the State-USAID Fiscal Year 2007–2012 Strategic Plan and three USAID assessments for the Sahel countries. We also reviewed a draft USAID report on critical drivers underlying terrorism. To further identify aspects of TSCTP's implementation, we met with U.S. embassy staff, foreign government officials and NGO representatives in Mali, Mauritania, and Morocco. We also interviewed relevant U.S. government officials in Washington, D.C., and EUCOM in Stuttgart, Germany. Further, we met with participants attending the annual TSCTP conference in Garmisch, Germany, including EUCOM officials and U.S. Embassy officials from Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia. To assess the disagreement between State and DOD related to the DOD personnel implementing TSCTP activities, we submitted questions requesting each agency's view regarding the chief of mission versus combatant command authorities at the embassy level. We received written responses from each agency and summarized these responses accordingly in our report. In addition, we plan to issue a classified annex to this report.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2007 through July 2008, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence

**Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and
Methodology**

obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Selected Accounts Used to Fund TSCTP Activities

State and USAID provide funding for TSCTP through the following key accounts:

- *Peacekeeping Operations* – Provides assistance to friendly countries and international organizations for peacekeeping operations and other programs carried out in furtherance of the national security interests of the United States.
- *Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs* – Supports activities designed to enhance the antiterrorism skills of friendly countries by providing training and equipment to deter and counter terrorism.
- *Economic Support Funds* – Supports assistance to countries in order to promote economic or political stability.
- *Development Assistance* – Used to transfer financial resources to developing countries as well as to help countries solve development problems in accordance with a strategy that aims to insure wide participation of the poor in the benefits of development on a sustained basis.
- *Foreign Military Financing* – Intended to promote U.S. national security by contributing to regional and global stability, strengthening military support for democratically-elected governments and containing transnational threats, including terrorism and trafficking in narcotics, weapons, and persons

DOD provides funding for TSCTP through the following key accounts:

- *Various Title X programs* – Primary source of funding to support activities conducted by the armed forces, including training with foreign friendly forces. Federal law contains legal restrictions that require DOD to conduct activities solely with foreign military personnel and prohibit DOD from providing training to foreign law enforcement personnel or paramilitary units.

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- *Section 1206 funds*¹ – DOD is authorized to conduct or support security assistance programs in foreign countries, using fiscal years 2006, 2007, and 2008 funds. These funds may be used by DOD with State's concurrence, to build the capacity of a foreign country's national military forces to (1) conduct counterterrorist operations or (2) participate in or support military and stability operations with the U.S. armed forces. These activities are jointly reviewed and approved by the Secretaries of Defense and State.
 - *Section 1207/1210 funds*² – DOD is authorized to provide services to and transfer defense articles and funds to State for security, stability, and/or reconstruction to maintain peace and security in a foreign country. These activities are jointly reviewed and approved by the Secretaries of Defense and State.
 - *Section 1208 funds* – DOD is authorized to reimburse foreign forces, groups, or individuals engaged in supporting or facilitating ongoing military operations by U.S. special operations forces to combat terrorism.

¹The National Defense Authorization Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1206, Jan. 6, 2006) authorized Section 1206 programs to be funded with funds from 2006 and 2007. The John Warner National Defense Authorization Act of 2007 (Pub. L. No. 109-364, § 1210, Oct. 17, 2006) extended this authorization to include funds from 2008.

²The National Defense Authorization Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1207, Jan. 6, 2006) authorized Section 1207 funds and services to be provided through the end of 2007. Section 1210 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2008 (Pub. L. No. 110-181 § 1210, Jan. 20, 2008) reauthorized and extended the program through 2008.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520

JUL 23 2008

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "COMBATING TERRORISM: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," GAO Job Code 320506.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Daniel Epstein, Desk Officer, Bureau of African Affairs at (202) 736-4435.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradford R. Higgins".

Bradford R. Higgins

cc: GAO – Charles Johnson
AF – Jendayi Frazer
State/OIG – Mark Duda

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Reports

**COMBATING TERRORISM: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation
of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership
(GAO-08-860, GAO Code 320506)**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report
*“Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of
Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.”*

We appreciate the GAO’s recommendations for maximizing the potential of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and the courtesy and professionalism of the GAO staff during the review. We agree with the report’s conclusion that “[i]n supporting diplomacy, development assistance, and military activities aimed at strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology of northwest Africa, the key agencies implementing TSCTP have undertaken an important effort to meet U.S. national security goals.” Supporting the efforts of countries in North and West Africa to prevent the spread of terrorism and the imposition of extremist ideology in the region is an important USG priority.

Most TSCTP partner countries are counted among the poorest countries in the world and currently lack the capacity to effectively combat this threat over the long-term. However, they have demonstrated critical political will to fight terrorism and will continue to benefit from U.S. assistance. The operation of TSCTP recognizes that a sustained interagency approach to counter-terrorism/counter-extremism is vital. The approach is designed to address immediate security challenges and assist countries in their long-term efforts to prevent terrorists from using the areas as sources of recruits, sanctuary, sustainment, and finance. The program’s long-term objective is to make the area inhospitable to terrorists and those who want to promote extremism.

The report’s recommendation regarding the importance of a comprehensive TSCTP strategy is consistent with our view that the initiative would benefit from an update of the core strategy developed in 2005. The strategy provides a strong foundation for program implementation and would benefit from updates on such issues as the analysis of the counter-terrorism challenge presented by the region, the funding levels and prioritization of the

USG and non-USG resources available and appropriate to respond to the challenges, and the methodology to evaluate program performance. Program implementation is guided by recognition that threats, requirements, and absorptive capacities vary widely among the TSCTP countries and our individual country engagement strategies are therefore tailored to respond to individual needs and opportunities.

The report's recommendation concerning the importance of guidance on the appropriate integration of Department of Defense (DOD) personnel into the U.S. Missions in TSCTP countries identifies another important issue. Pursuant to the President's Letter of Instruction to Chiefs of Mission (COMs), the COM has full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all United States Government executive branch employees in his or her country of assignment, regardless of their employment categories or location, except those under command of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization.

Most DOD personnel implementing TSCTP activities on a nonpermanent basis are under the command of the area military commander and thus, pursuant to the terms of the President's letter to COMs, do not directly fall under COM authority. In practice, however, these DOD personnel come under COM control at post: they seek clearance from the Ambassador to enter the country to conduct their activities, and while posted there they abide by COM rules and policies and are subject to the COM's supervision. DOD's common practice in TSCTP countries of deploying personnel for *seriatim* "enduring presence" extended tdy periods, however, creates positions considered "permanent" under Department policy. Like other permanent Mission positions, employees encumbering those positions should come under COM authority. If a COM and the area military commander are unable to reach agreement, they may refer the issue to the Secretaries of State and Defense for resolution.

Appendix IV: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development



Mr. Charles M. Johnson, Jr., Director
International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

JUL 24 2008

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft GAO report entitled Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (GAO-08-860).

USAID has been a committed partner in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) from its inception. While this area of programming is not part of the traditional focus of reducing poverty, advancing democracy, building market economies, promoting security, responding to crises, and improving quality of life, USAID recognizes the strategic contribution that such assistance provides in addressing broader challenges.

USAID appreciates the recommendations in the report that reinforce our efforts to encourage interagency collaboration and create efficiencies in implementation. For example, in the most recent TSCTP Interagency Conference, one of the key recommendations was to update the original planning documents from 2005. USAID is also moving forward with field testing of indicators to better determine if development activities affect the root causes of extremism in an Africa context. In terms of detailed technical comments, our staff provided technical comments to your staff earlier in the week by email.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this review. We look forward to receiving the final report once completed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Franklin C. Moore".

Franklin Moore
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Africa

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
www.usaid.gov

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

 **OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400**

JUL 28 2008

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Mr. Charles M. Johnson, Jr.
Director, International Affairs & Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Johnson:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report GAO-08-860, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," dated July 9, 2008 (GAO Code 320506).

The GAO recommends that the Secretaries of State and Defense develop and issue joint guidance with regard to DoD personnel conducting operations in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) partner countries (Page 26/GAO Draft Report).

DoD partially concurs with the GAO recommendation. Sufficient guidance exists in governing statutes and directives that prescribe the authorities of the Combatant Commander (COCOM) and the Chief of Mission (COM) regarding deployed DoD personnel, including those participating in TSCTP efforts under Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS). Examples include: 10 U.S.C. Section 164, 22 U.S.C. Section 3902(a), 22 U.S.C. 3927, 22 U.S.C. 4802(c), the Foreign Affairs Handbook Volume 2, the Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 1, each COM Letter of Instruction from the President, and Joint Publication 1, "Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States," dated May 14, 2007 (specifically in Chapters II and IV). However, issuing further guidance reflecting the implications of DoD's growing role in shaping and deterrence operations would be helpful to both COCOMs and COMs in the TSCTP region.

We understand that further analytic details regarding TSCTP, specifically addressing Department and Agency obligations in the context of the original strategic guidance and resource commitments, will be addressed in a follow-on classified annex.

Specific DoD comments regarding GAO recommendations are contained in the attachment.



**Appendix V: Comments from the Department
of Defense**

My point of contact on this issue is Mr. Jeff McManus at commercial (703) 571-9398 or electronic mail address: jeffrey.mcmanus@osd.mil

Sincerely,



Theresa Whelan
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
for African Affairs

GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED JULY 9, 2008
GAO-08-860 (GAO CODE 320506)

**"COMBATING TERRORISM: ACTIONS NEEDED TO ENHANCE
IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANS-SAHARA
COUNTERTERRORISM PARTNERSHIP"**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
ON THE GAO RECOMMENDATIONS**

GENERAL COMMENTS: The report assesses the strategic objectives, resource obligations, and challenges faced by the U.S. departments and agencies in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). The GAO states there is no comprehensive, integrated strategy to guide TSCTP implementation. The report outlines disagreements between State and DoD regarding what State's authority should be for some DoD personnel conducting TSCTP activities in some countries. The report states that fluctuations in the distribution of obligations for TSCTP activities have limited USAID's implementation of TSCTP. The report points out that the U.S. Government has few common mechanisms for measuring TSCTP activities' outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION: The GAO recommends that the Secretaries of State and Defense develop and issue joint guidance with regard to DoD personnel conducting operations in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) partner countries (Page 26/GAO Draft Report).

DOD RESPONSE: Partially Concur. Sufficient guidance exists in governing statutes and directives that prescribe the authorities of the Combatant Commander (COCOM) and the Chief of Mission (COM) regarding deployed DoD personnel, including those participating in TSCTP efforts under Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS). Examples include: 10 U.S.C. Section 164, 22 U.S.C. Section 3902(a), 22 U.S.C. 3927, 22 U.S.C. 4802(c), the Foreign Affairs Handbook Volume 2, the Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 1, each COM Letter of Instruction from the President, and Joint Publication 1, "Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States, dated May 14, 2007 (specifically in Chapters II and IV).

However, issuing further guidance reflecting the implications of DoD's growing role in shaping and deterrence operations would be helpful to both COCOMs and COMs in the TSCTP region.

Attachment

**Appendix V: Comments from the Department
of Defense**

We understand that further analytic details regarding TSCTP, specifically addressing Department and Agency obligations in the context of the original strategic guidance and resource commitments, will be addressed in a follow-on classified annex.

Attachment

The following is GAO's comment from the Department of Defense's letter dated July 28, 2008.

GAO Comment

1. DOD states that it partially concurs with our recommendation that State and DOD develop and issue joint guidance with regard to DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in the partner countries. DOD believes that sufficient guidance exists in the government documents that define the authorities of DOD's Combatant Commander (COCOM) and State's Chief of Mission (COM). DOD also comments that issuing joint guidance reflecting the implications of the shift to a greater DOD emphasis and support in shaping and deter operations would be helpful to both COCOMs and COMs in the TSCTP region. In response to DOD's comments, we have cited both COCOM and COM authorities in the report. However, we maintain that joint guidance from State and DOD is needed to resolve existing disagreements over implementation of these authorities in some TSCTP countries.

Appendix VI: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

Zina D. Merritt (Assistant Director), Ashley Alley, Nanette J. Barton, David Dornisch, Reid Lelong Lowe, and John F. Miller made key contributions to this report.

Related GAO Products

Afghanistan Security: Further Congressional Action May Be Needed to Ensure Completion of a Detailed Plan to Develop and Sustain Capable Afghan National Security Forces. [GAO-08-661](#). Washington, D.C.: June 18, 2008.

Combating Terrorism: The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. [GAO-08-622](#). Washington, D.C.: April 17, 2008.

Combating Terrorism: State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes. [GAO-08-336](#). Washington, D.C.: February 29, 2008.

Combating Terrorism: Law Enforcement Agencies Lack Directives to Assist Foreign Nations to Identify, Disrupt, and Prosecute Terrorists. [GAO-07-697](#). Washington, D.C.: May 25, 2007.

Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies. [GAO-06-15](#). Washington, D.C.: October 21, 2005.

International Affairs: Information on U.S. Agencies' Efforts to Address Islamic Extremism. [GAO-05-852](#). Washington, D.C.: September 16, 2005.

Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism. [GAO-04-408T](#). Washington, D.C.: February 3, 2004.

Combating Terrorism: Interagency Framework and Agency Programs to Address the Overseas Threat. [GAO-03-165](#). Washington, D.C.: May 23, 2003.

Combating Terrorism: Observations on National Strategies Related to Terrorism. [GAO-03-519T](#). Washington, D.C.: March 3, 2003.

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